



# CANARI POLICY BRIEF No.20

## Enabling Civil Society in Saint Lucia to adapt to the impacts of climate change

2015

### Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction

#### Summary

The Government of Saint Lucia is taking action through the development of policies as well as targeted investments and interventions to facilitate climate change adaptation action. Given the scope of the climate change challenge, multi-level responses from the international community, national and local governments, and civil society organisations are necessary. However, civil society organisations are not in a position to play an effective role due to constraints in existing policies, structures and processes. Civil society organisations need to be made aware of the needs and the opportunities available to them to engage in national adaptation efforts. There needs to be stronger communication, coordination and collaboration among sectors, and between government and civil society.

#### Key messages

- 1. National climate change adaptation efforts must include the involvement of civil society to be effective.**
- 2. Several barriers within the prevailing policy, legal and institutional environment limit effective responses by civil society to climate change impacts.**
- 3. Coordination, collaboration and communications on climate change impacts and adaptation measures between key public sector agencies and civil society need to be improved to support national adaptation efforts.**
- 4. Climate change policy needs to be strengthened to enable enhanced national adaptation efforts.**

#### Climate change adaptation efforts in Saint Lucia

Climate change impacts are already being seen in Saint Lucia. Damages from extreme weather events and changes in temperature and rainfall patterns,<sup>1</sup> for example, have been attributed to a changing climate. In addition, studies have predicted that future impacts will include an increase in average atmospheric temperature; reduced average annual rainfall; increased Sea Surface Temperatures (SST) and the potential for an increase in the intensity of tropical storms<sup>2</sup>.

In spite of institutional constraints, however, Saint Lucia has been able to make some progress with respect to climate change adaptation. For example, the drafting of the National Climate Change Policy and Adaptation Plan was a significant step towards guiding the actions of government and non-government entities in planning for and responding to climate change. However, even with such steps, barriers to fully engage civil society in climate change adaptation efforts still exist.

<sup>1</sup> Simpson, M. C., Clarke, J. F., Scott, D. J., New, M., Karmalkar, A., Day, O. J., Taylor, M., Gossling, S., Wilson, M., Chadee, D., Stager, H., Waithe, R., Stewart, A., Georges, J., Hutchinson, N., Fields, N., Sim, R., Ruttly, M., Matthews, L., and Charles, S. (2012). CARIBSAVE Climate Change Risk Atlas (CCCR) - Saint Lucia. DFID, AusAID and The CARIBSAVE Partnership, Barbados, West Indies.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid



*Figure 1: Coastal Erosion at Anse de Sable Beach, Vieux Fort (December 2013). Without effective adaptation measures climate change driven impacts such as sea-level rise will exacerbate coastal erosion. (Source SLNT)*



*Figure 2: Destruction to the Vieux Fort Highway caused by seawater inundation. Without action more intense storms brought on by climate change will continue to cause costly damage to infrastructure. (Source SLNT)*

### **Barriers to effectively engage civil society in climate adaptation efforts still exist**

There are several barriers within the prevailing institutional environment in Saint Lucia that limit effective engagement and responses by civil society to climate change impacts. Some of these barriers include:

- Limited access to technical information in formats and language understandable to the average citizen and civil society
- Limited public awareness programmes on climate change adaptation and so insufficient awareness of civil society organisations about priority needs and opportunities for them to play a role
- Weak and fragmented civil society organisations with limited capacity to effectively engage in policy development, planning and on the ground actions.

### **Some key challenges for priority action**

***Inadequate mainstreaming of climate considerations into national planning and development decisions and processes:*** The effects of climate change will persist for many years to come. Including adaptive measures in regular national and

sector level planning is therefore necessary to reduce negative outcomes and build resilience. At present, there are no regulations requiring that adaptation measures be included in national planning and project development. This makes it difficult for civil society organisations to support mainstreaming.

***Inadequate access to existing climate information:*** Having access to reliable climate data and information is an important prerequisite for decision-making, policy development and adaptation planning. Present data management, analysis and dissemination capabilities,



*Figure 3: Coastal protection measures are in place to try to protect the coastal village of Soufriere from storm surges and sea level rise. (Source CANARI)*



*Figure 4: Heavy rainfall erodes riverbanks and this is predicted to worsen with projected more intense storms due to climate change. (Source CANARI)*

however, are inadequate, making it difficult for civil society organisations to access relevant information to plan response measures.

***Insufficient coordination, collaboration and communication between government and civil society:*** While some adaptation measures are being implemented through government-led projects, there is little evidence that civil society is concretely responding to climate change impacts, or indeed is aware that some of their changing existential circumstances are climate related. Civil society's "unresponsiveness" has been in part due to inadequate engagement of civil society by government.

### **What can be done to help strengthen institutional capacity to adapt to climate change**

National adaptation efforts can be enhanced by improving climate change policies. The policy recommendations, outlined below, are based on the findings of a participatory research study to determine the readiness of institutions in Saint Lucia to adapt to climate change<sup>3</sup>. It is envisaged that these

recommendations can help guide national policy responses.

- Mainstream climate considerations into national planning and development decision processes. With the right regulatory and policy framework, civil society organisations can support mainstreaming actions through their roles in public awareness, advocacy and in providing technical support.
- Develop and implement a clear policy that will facilitate easy access to climate and related data and information by civil society. One action under such a policy could be the establishment of an online data-base of relevant climate change projects and studies. With improved access to accurate climate information, civil society organisations will improve their capacity to engage in the arrangements to mainstream climate change adaptation in policy, planning and implementation at the national, sectoral and community levels.

- Develop an effective mechanism to facilitate better coordination between government and civil society. Such a mechanism should be developed in a participatory manner with input from civil society. Improving mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and communication will help to raise awareness and commitment of civil society to participate in climate change adaptation efforts.



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